FINDING JOBS FOR ALL KINDS OF WORKERS IN THE UNITED STATES

Terence V. Powderly Tells of Government Plan to Create Employment Agency Covering Every City and Village So That Help and Situations May Be Obtained Without Payment of Fees

A MAN who was once a coal digger, a man who was once a tramp machinist and a man who once clerked in a crossroads store are working out a countrywide plan to bring together persons wanting work and persons wanting workers.

The former miner is William B. Wilson, Secretary of Labor in the President's Cabinet. He came to the United States in the steerage from Scotland when a youngster.

The former roving machinist is Terence V. Powderly, once the chief of the Knights of Labor and now a Government officer under Secretary Wilson. His father, an Irishman, 6 feet 3 inches in stature, landed on the shores of Canada with a shilling in his pocket.

The former rural clerk is Anthony Caminetti, Commissioner of Immigration. His nationality can be read in the name of his father, which was Rocco Caminetti. The family finally settled in California, where Anthony bacame a lawyer. Mr. Powderly, too, was admitted to the bar, but in Pennsylvania.

The day may not be remote when you, madam, needing a housemaid, cook or seamstress, may notify the national Government and soon have a housemaid, cook or seamstress rapping at your door. Or if your husband wants a chauffeur, a gardener or a bookkeeper he also may apply to Uncle Sam instead of advertising in the newspapers.

To put the matter still more plainly, the national Government is now engaged in creating an employment agency covering every city and village in the country, and every farm, it can be said, so that any one needing help may obtain it without the payment of a fee, and any one needing work may obtain it speedily without a cent of cost to himself.

"All this should have been done," Mr. Powderly told me, "twenty-five years ago."

Caminetti is subordinate to Wilson and Powderly is subordinate to Caminetti, but all are scheming and toiling together in one of the greatest activities ever undertaken by the Washington Government. Powderly, however, has long been supplying farmers with herdsmen, orchardists and laborers, and the details of the new organization have been turned over to him.

Eight years ago he was appointed chief of the division of information in the bureau of immigration, and since then he has been trying to break up the congestion of aliens at the large ports along the Atlantic seaboard and to start the newcomers from Europe toward the agricultural regions of the West. So far he has settled 40,000 families.

There was a day when T. V. Powderly was pictured as a big rough man, with a big, rough army at his beck and call. He has never been big, however, and never rough. Now, at the age of 66, he looks more like an author—Lew Wallace, for instance, writer of "Ben-Hur"—than like an agitator, as he was once called, or a battle scarred veteran of the wars savagely fought by workingmen a generation ago. He has always been courteous, diplomatic, imaginative and rhetorical.

Briefly described, such is the man who is still trying "to solve the labor problem." He has been "distributing" and finding jobs for immigrants. Hereafter he will try to find jobs for every kind of worker in the country, for the newest of aliens with all of their property in bundles on their backs as well as for members of the Sons or Daughters of the American Revolution.

"How many idle men are there in the United States?" Mr. Powderly was asked, the question being intended as a door opener to the latest information he possessed.

"We do not know," he replied. "The same inquiry was put to me in 1882 by the editor of the *North American Review*. I investigated the matter and in the article I prepared I said that 2,000,000 men were out of work in this country.

"Later I gave the subject my personal attention, rejecting all the figures that were not official, and concluded that I had probably overestimated the number of men then idle at our mines, in our mills and factories and on our farms and railroads.

"Since the publication of my paper in the *Review* I have been studying that particular phase of the labor question. Many thousands of men are out of work every winter even in good times. Masons, bricklayers, plasterers, carpenters and structural ironworkers are idle in cold weather. The men who help them are idle. Teamsters who haul material to them are idle.

"Less freight—bricks, lumber and so on—is shipped over the railroads and fewer train hands in consequence are employed. Brickyards, sawmills and iron works are slowed down. Seasonal conditions, you see, are far reaching and include the farms, where there is little to do except to take care of the live stock.

"Therefore in bad times and prosperous times thousands of men are unemployed at their usual callings for a considerable period every winter. We overlook this serious social fact and fail to realize that a great army of our workers, thrifty men for most part, must spend in cold weather the savings they put away when they have employment.

"It is said by a large body of our voters that the tariff, if lowered, lets in foreign goods and that when foreign goods come into our market Americans are deprived of the wages they would have been paid had the goods been manufactured in this country. I will not go into that much discussed aspect of the tariff question.

"Let me say, however, that if all Americans would follow my custom, foreign goods could find no sale in the United States and tariff discussions would come to an end on the stump and in newspapers. I never buy anything that is made outside of this country.

"The cloth in my clothing, my hats, my shoes, my hose, my linen and my underwear are now and always have been manufactured in the United States.

"My coffee comes from Brazil, I suppose; my tea from China or Japan and my spices from some faraway islands or countries, but everything else that goes into my house is made or grown at home. That is the only way by which to settle the tariff question and to take it out of politics."

"What is the national Government doing to find employment for men out of work?" Mr. Powderly was asked.

"A law of 1907 created the division of information in the Bureau of Immigration. I was appointed chief of the division, the duty of which, the law orders, is to promote a beneficial distribution of aliens admitted into the United States among the several States and Territories desiring immigration.

"I was directed by the law to gather from all available sources useful information regarding the resources, products and physical characteristics of each State and Territory, to publish such information in different languages and to distribute publications containing the information among all admitted aliens 'who may ask for such publications at the immigrant stations.'

"Were you to land at Calais in France, or Genoa in Italy you would hardly ask for a printed document of which you had never heard. We got around the 'may ask' phrasing of the law and arranged that immigrants arriving in this country should be told where they were most likely to obtain employment.

"So began the efforts of the national Government to bring employees and employers together. We called it the 'distribution' of aliens to those regions where workmen were in demand. Our object was to promote their own welfare and to do a service for those who were looking for laborers and also for skilled men. At the same time we were relieving the pressure on the districts near the seaboard where the market for workers was oversupplied."

"Only a few immigrants, however, are farmers," I said.

"More are farmers than you think," Mr. Powderly replied. "Until recently the poor man in Europe has supposed there are only four places for him to work in the United States—in holes in the ground, as he calls a mine; on the tracks of a railroad; on the streets of a city and around furnaces, factories and mills.

"I am speaking now, of course, of the notion in the head of the average peasant in southeastern Europe. Little, heretofore, has been said about agriculture to the immigrants setting out for America. Secretary Wilson's policy, however, is to show the workingmen who are thinking about emigrating to the United States the possibilities open to them as farmers in the West. More agricultural laborers will come to this country in the future, I believe, than was the case formerly.

"Under the law of 1907, we have, so far, located 40,000 families. I receive letters almost every day from men whom I have directed to the West. 'You found me a place,' the writer will say, 'with Mr. Smith of Blankton, Mo., five years ago. I now own a farm of my own and would like to have you send me a good, steady man.' It is pleasant to get such letters," Mr. Powderly added.

"The Department of Commerce and Labor," he continued, "was cut in two by the act of 1913. There are now a Department of Commerce and a Department of Labor and one more Cabinet officer than formerly. The aim of the Department of Labor, the very purpose of its creation, in fact, is to foster, promote and develop the welfare of wage earners, to improve their working conditions and to advance their opportunities for profitable employment.

"Learning what has been done to send agricultural workers on to farms, Secretary Wilson sought to extend the service and to make the distribution of aliens simpler and easier. Obtaining the cooperation of the Post Office Department, he had cards put into the hands of 8,000,000 farmers. The cards, distributed by rural mail carriers, notified farmers that when they needed helpers they could, free of cost, obtain such helpers by writing to the Department of Labor in Washington.

"The plan worked out splendidly. A farmer, on telling us the kind of labor he wanted done, was required to fill out an application blank stating the wages he was willing to pay, whether he preferred a married or unmarried man—giving also his nationality—and the amount of money he would advance (if any were needed) to meet the cost of transportation.

"From my office in Washington the card was sent to our agent on Ellis Island, in the harbor of New York. A man meeting the requirements of the farmer was found and started on his way to Iowa, Minnesota or some other State. Often in such cases the man had enough money to pay for his railroad ticket.

"When the farmer, however, advanced any part of the money the check for the man's baggage was sent to him in a letter. This precaution against fraud was invariably taken, though the immigrants, with only an exception now and then, were honest and meant to go to the places we had found for them.

"Last year we were in a position to supply wheat farmers with 60,000 harvest hands, aliens and natives, whom we gathered up in various parts of the country. Thousands of bushels of grain would have remained in the fields and been lost but for the help of these harvesters.

"Such, then, has been the nature of our work in the past. We are now engaged in extending it so as to reach every section of the country and to include all kinds of wage earners, males and females, immigrants and old settlers. This we are doing through the post offices, but the day is near at hand when we shall have our own agents in all the cities, large and small, East and West.

"We look across those roofs," Mr. Powderly said, pointing out of a window in his office, which is eight stories from the ground. "Somewhere in the area within our vision a paperhanger, this minute, perhaps, is being told that his employer will not require his services after to-day.

"In the very same area a dealer in paper may need a paperhanger tomorrow. So far as their knowledge of each other goes the dealer might as well be in New York and the paperhanger in Cincinnati. Our plan is to bring them together.

"How? By having the paperhanger go to the post office, where he will fill out a blank card and put it in a case. Also by having the dealer go to the post office, where he will fill out an employer's card and put it in a separate case. Thus when the paperhanger is out of work he will visit the post office and look through the employer's case. When the dealer needs a paperhanger he will visit the post-office and look through the employee's case.

"Before the close of the year 1915 every large post office in the country will be a national employment agency. Men of all trades and of no trades will find jobs by consulting our cases of cards and persons needing workers will obtain workers in the same way. Inside of two years, I venture to say, agents of the Department of Labor will be stationed in all of our cities, big and little, purposely 'to advance the opportunities of wage-earners,' as reads the law, 'for profitable employment.'"

"But at what cost," Mr. Powderly was asked, "to the national Government?"

"I do not know," he answered. "I am not a financial statistician. The cost will be large, but the good done to the country and its inhabitants will be worth all the money that is spent for the great object we are sure to accomplish."

"Is it your intention to supply firms and corporations with bookkeepers, clerks and stenographers?"

"Surely, and also with tanners, blacksmiths, carpenters, moulders and so on, including common laborers. Women, too, may obtain cooks, maids, nurses and dressmakers. We mean to cover the whole field of labor."

"Are workingmen—in normal times, of course—better off than they were twenty years ago?"

"Oh, they are infinitely better off than at any time in the past. They are getting more, they are spending more and they are saving more. Besides, they have come into a fuller knowledge of their own worth, and that is tremendously helpful in bringing about the day toward which all just and patriotic men are looking.

"I have never been extravagant in spending money for clothing, but I have always dressed well; that has been my policy and one of my pleasures. And what I bought was made in the United States. I remember that some of the Knights of Labor whom I addressed remarked that I didn't look overmuch like a workingman. I was but 30 years old when elected chief of that once powerful organization and was personally unknown to most of the members.

"My reply was that workingmen, above all other classes of Americans, were entitled to buy and wear good clothing. 'A shoemaker,' I said, 'ought to feel particularly comfortable in calfskin boots. A tailor has a right to put on broadcloth. If a hatter,' I said, 'is ashamed to wear a silk hat on Sunday he ought to be ashamed to make hats for other people.'

"That was my doctrine thirty-five years ago. It is my doctrine now. Workingmen, I am glad to say, have come to look as prosperous as anybody. They are buying homes and pianos and are depositing money in the banks. They are reading the newspapers and their children are going to school. Little by little society is changing and the profits of civilization are being more justly distributed."

"Do you look for a large increase in the number of immigrants after the war in Europe is over?"

"No. Most of the men who would have emigrated to th[illegible] be dead. The weakl[illegible] home, knowing they w[illegible] mitted to enter the Unit[illegible] Strong men who live th[illegible] war will be too poor to pay [illegible] sage across the Atlanti[illegible] industries of Great Brit[illegible] Belgium, Germany, Austr[illegible] sia, in large part will ha[illegible] built. Wages will go up, [illegible] abundant and steerage pa[illegible] the way to America, in [illegible] will be comparatively [illegible] number."

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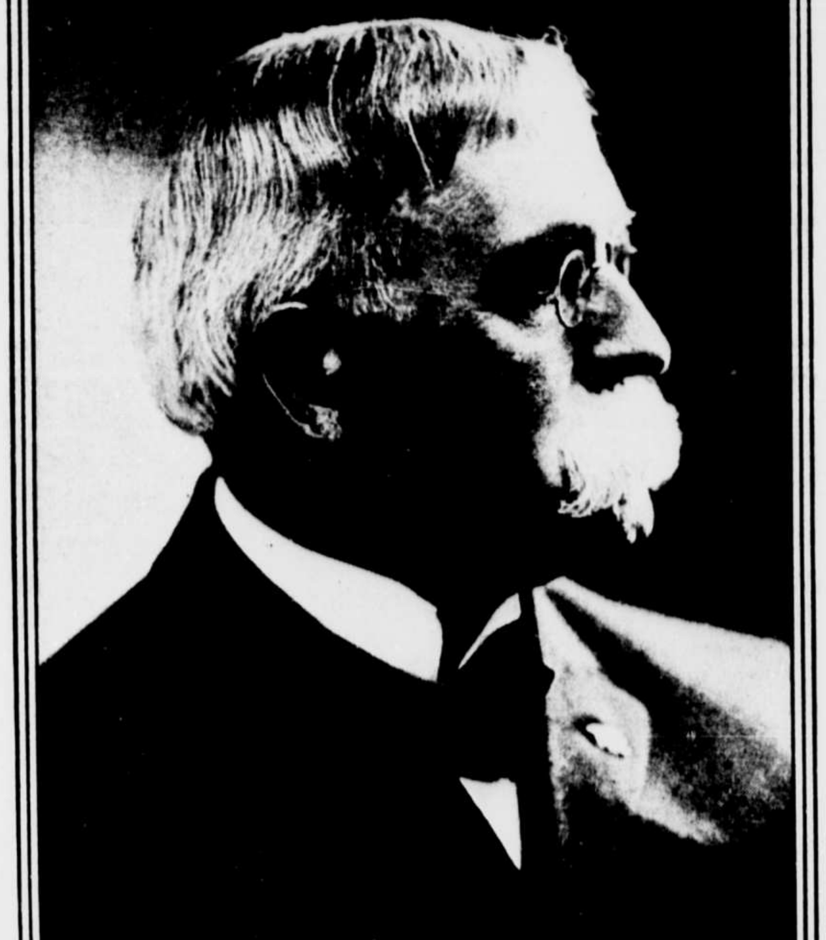

Terence V. Powderly.

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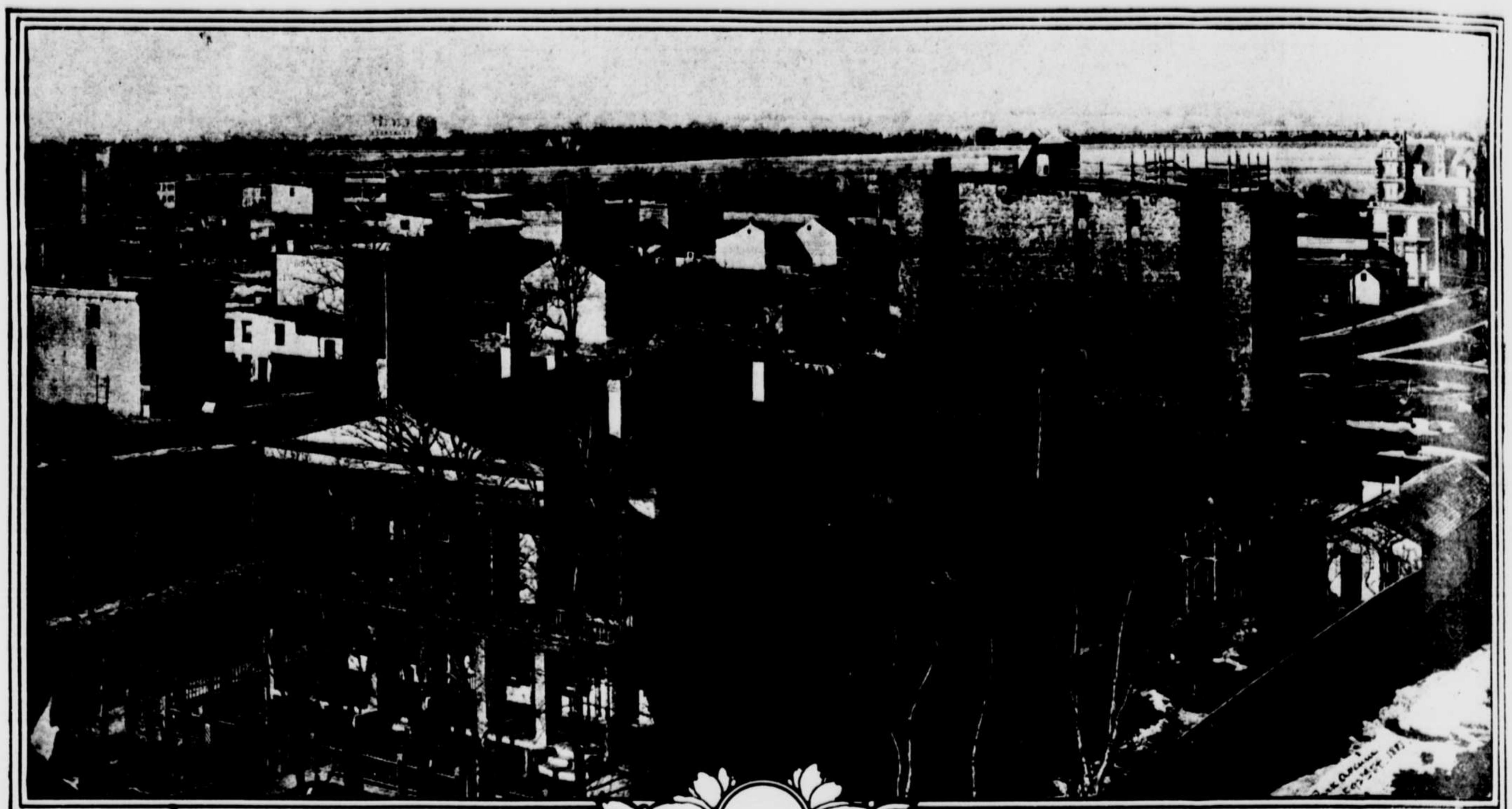
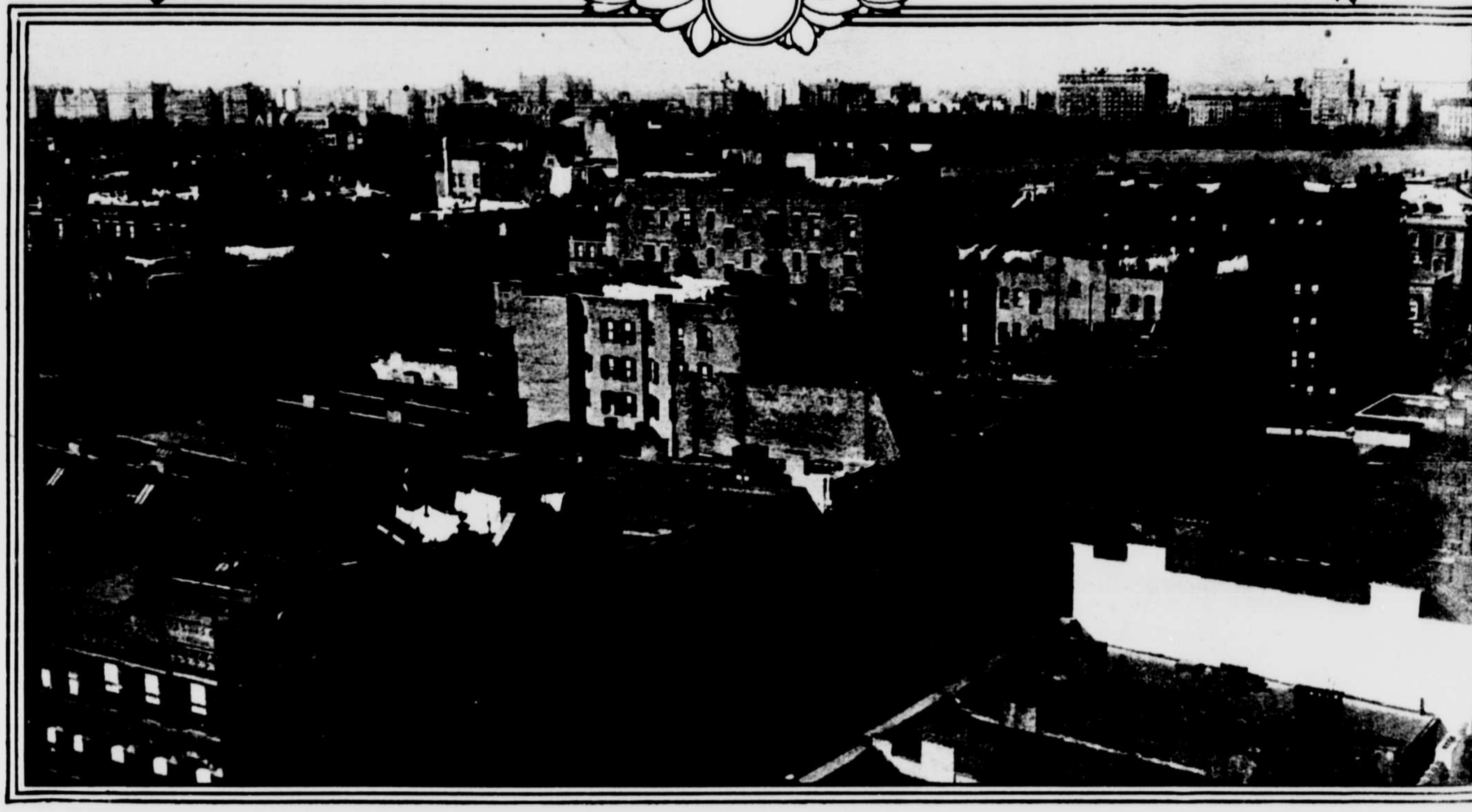
Part of New York Thirty-two Years Ago and Now





Ninety-second street and Park avenue to-day.

Above—Looking southwest from Ninety-second street and Park avenue in 1883.

USES AND ORIGIN OF JITNEY

"SPEAKING of the much talked of jitney," said a New Yorked Kentuckian, "not as a possible mode of transportation but as a word hitherto unknown in these parts, I have been gathering some information about it.

"When I first saw the word in print in Eastern newspapers it was stated that it was the common term for a nickel in the West. Having lived somewhat in that section and also in the South I thought it rather strange that I had never heard the word there, and I began making inquiries among Southern and Western acquaintances in New York. None as far as I could discover knew any more about it than I did.

"Appeals to other nearby sources brought no more information and I concluded to go to the West for the desired knowledge. Seattle being one of the points where the jitney bus was flourishing like a green bay hoss used to flourish, I wrote to my one time editorial 'buddy,' Horace McClure, now of the editorial staff of the Seattle *Times*. From him I have just received a letter which comes so near being information that I am willing to accept it as far as it goes."

Then he read this letter:

"I think the word jitney sprang up in Kentucky, meaning the genius who can make a one cent stamp do the work of a two. When this thing broke a few weeks ago I became philologic. My effort, which appeared editorially here, has been widely copied in the West. I enclose a copy of it, along with other stuff which I have nailed en passant, which is a Chinook phrase current in our best social circles.

"One of the fellows in the office tells me that jitney is used by London cockneys to indicate the very smallest tip. For example: 'What did he give you?' 'Oh, a jitney.' Another says it is employed by some poker players as the name for the smallest chip—maybe a penny, or tw[illegible] fifty cents, or a dollar, or [illegible] according to the rules of th[illegible] the quality of blood back[illegible] I never heard cockney[illegible] nor did I ever encounter [illegible] player who had it in his [illegible] My little editorial states [illegible] about as completely as [illegible] my present state of educa[illegible]

Here is the editorial:

"What is jitney? The qu[illegible] been asked many times [illegible] the Pacific Northwest s[illegible] vasion of trolley line[illegible] small motor cars. It w[illegible] leavened exponent of sl[illegible] the question correctly. T[illegible] not appear in ordinary [illegible] and its etymology is there[illegible] ter of doubt.

"Jitney is used by colore[illegible] and poor whites in the ex[illegible] eastern portion of the U[illegible] for a nickel. It is just as [illegible] a term there as lagniappe [illegible] Orleans—the latter mea[illegible] to follow a purchase of th[illegible] of a bill.

"From what appears [illegible] its source jitney has [illegible] Louisiana, Arizona and N[illegible] and from it has come an [illegible] 'jit a man,' meaning [illegible] change. The expression [illegible] the cities—before the ar[illegible] jitney bus—and in some [illegible] understood to mean a sm[illegible] money, but usually [illegible] meaning as indicating a [illegible] piece."

"There," the Kentuck[illegible] folding up his documents [illegible] information than I have [illegible] secure anywhere in the [illegible] it is not correct, where [illegible] erner who knows enough [illegible] refute it with more auth[illegible] mation? Don't all answ[illegible] please."